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# **Putting the Poor to Work**

*A Conceptual and Critical Analysis  
of the Expanded Public Works Programme  
in South Africa*

**Aimée Kühl**

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## **COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# ABBREVIATIONS

Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

Construction Industry Innovation and Empowerment Unit (CIIEU)

Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW)

Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP)

Empowerment Impact Assessment tool (EmplA)

Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

Gross domestic product (GDP)

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

National Public Works Programme" (NPWP)

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)

Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU)

## **ABSTRACT**

Since political freedom in 1994, the South African government has continuously been confronted with high rates of unemployment and persevering poverty. As a central policy response, Public Works Programmes are meant to address both the problem of unemployment and a range of social and economic development challenges. The latest initiative under these principles is the Expanded Public Works Programme. Regarded as the flagship employment project of post-apartheid government, its implementation has not been without controversy. Research evaluating the outcomes of Public Works Programmes in South Africa has revealed that these initiatives have not delivered to their proclaimed objectives. Nevertheless policy makers have labelled them as a success and continue to promote their implementation. This thesis looks into how the concept of Public Works Programmes has developed along historical and theoretical lines to reveal how authors writing for international institutions such as the World Bank have substantially dominated the production of knowledge on the topic. This has led to inappropriate policy choices, errors in programme design and unrealistic expectations on the part of policy implementers especially in developing countries. A qualitative case study on the micro-level performance of the EPWP then draws attention to the undifferentiated and superficial analysis the literature has delivered, emphasizing how economists have failed to adequately conceptualise and evaluate Public Works Programmes.

# INTRODUCTION

High rates of unemployment continue to be one of the most daunting challenges in South Africa. Since political freedom, scholars, politicians and organized labour maintain that creating employment for a growing number of unskilled workers and the unemployed to some extent is the responsibility of the state. As a central policy response, Public Works Programmes are meant to address both the problem of unemployment and a range of social and economic development challenges. The use of employment intensive programmes is not new South Africa. Public works initiatives were first employed to address the so-called 'white poor problem' in the 1930s while a renewed interest in these initiatives re-emerged in the 1980s when the growth rate of GDP and overall income per capita began to decline (Thwala, 2011, p. 3). Titled the "National Public Works Programme" (NPWP), public works principles became a critical element of job creation efforts in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994 (Biyase, 2005, p. 15) and continue to feature prominently in the most recent programme under this prerogative, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

In theory, Public Works Programmes achieve a range of development objectives. Their main attributes being the creation of employment through the establishment of infrastructure, the provision of services or improving access to them and the stimulation of informal or formal sector economic activity. As such, Public Works Programmes are currently a popular social protection instrument in situations of chronic, as well as acute poverty, seeming to offer a 'win win' policy option; providing employment, while also creating assets, offering a welfare transfer which is also a tangible economic investment (McCord, 2005). This in mind, the NPWP established a set of ambitious and complex objectives: (1) create, rehabilitate, and maintain physical assets that serve to meet the basic needs of poor communities and promote broader economic activity; (2) reduce unemployment through the creation of productive jobs; (3) educate and train those on the program as a means of economic empowerment; and (4) build the capacity of communities to manage their own affairs, strengthening local government and other community-based institutions, and generating sustainable economic development (Haddad & Adato, 2001, p. 2f). Since its launch, the EPWP did not substantially deviate from this course and has come to be regarded as the

flagship employment project of post-apartheid government (HSRC, 2007). The key outcomes, which are to be attained through this strategy, are “the creation of decent employment through inclusive economic growth plus an efficient and effective development-orientated Public Service and an empowered fair and inclusive citizenship”<sup>1</sup>.

Considering these ambitious goals, both public works initiatives have encompassed the reduction of unemployment, infrastructure creation and wider indirect social objectives into their strategy. To adequately understand the prominence of Public Works Programmes as a policy tool and to what extent they live up to their expectations; the following chapter reviews the development of the concept along historical and theoretical lines.

## **1. PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES: A HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

The discussion on providing social security for marginalized groups in society has since the systematic inception of welfare in the 19<sup>th</sup> century dealt with how and to what extent the state is responsible for supporting the poor and unemployed. Parallel to this, putting the unemployed to work through state expenditure is a similarly old concept. Starting in discussions on economic theory in Europe and the U.S., public works initiatives have gained momentum in other parts of the world as social policy means to counteracting poverty. This chapter describes how the concept developed theoretically and how it was influenced by different economic objectives and ideological approaches over time.

While early socialists such as Louis Blanc attempted short-lived experiments with public works initiatives in 1848, scholars concerned with the functioning of the economy looked at public employment schemes in the context of the demands and characteristics of economic production and consumption. Public Works Programmes formed a part of the literature advising actions to stimulate an economy usually during a recessionary period. Main attributes being government spending, interest rate and tax reductions – “pump priming” assumed that the economy must be primed to function properly once again. In this regard,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pmg.org.za/report/20100420-department-public-works-strategic-plan-budget>

government spending was to stimulate private spending, which in turn should lead to economic expansion (Anderson, 1944). As a remedy for the depressed economic conditions such as followed after a war, the English scholar T.R. Malthus suggested the employment of the poor in roads and public works to help balance the disturbances of produce and consumption (Anderson, 1944, p. 144). In 1912, the American writer William Hard published an article in *The American Labor Legislation Review* emphasizing the rising issue of unemployment and how the private industry was not likely to do something about it: "It does not seem likely that Capital, of its own motion, will step forward and offer a solution" (Hard, 1912). Two years later, he advocated, "when the waters of business are stagnant, gentlemen, it becomes necessary, if I may say so, to prime the pump" (Hard, 1916). By this time, the discussion began around how to generate state capital for public expenditure programmes and looking into adequately planning the scope for such kind of initiatives commenced. Hart was one of the first to state that a large amount of public works was needed for such a policy to be effective, while stating that projects must be selected and appropriations made contingent upon the order of the president so that public works can be increased immediately as soon as a depression begins (Hard, 1916). As such, Public Works Programmes were a government led policy intervention with a twofold of objectives. They were meant to offer employment to the marginalized but by doing so they simultaneously stimulated private industry through government expenditure in times of stagnation and recession.

During the remainder of the decade, little was accomplished in the way of theoretical analysis on the pump-priming theory (Anderson, 1945). However, the severe depression, which began in the latter part of 1929, not only spurred the debate on welfare issues but also revived interest in depression remedies, including public works. From 1920 onwards, cycle theorists had been contested by sluggish growth rates and rising long-term unemployment revealing the structural nature of the economic crisis (Hudson, 1985, p. 41). Classical and neoclassical economists considered unemployment as only a transitory phenomenon, and have either denied or minimized the existence of involuntary unemployment (Kaboub, 2007, p. 3). They argued against state action in economic affairs but the continued downfall and recession of the economy pressurized the long-standing objections to governmental intervention in the economic field. The inabilities of private



industry to cope with unemployment proved a powerful argument in favour of letting government tackle the problem (Malisoff, 1939, p. 246). In contrast to the demands for liberal market mechanisms, the debate for state intervention found revival. In the contrary to the emphasis that government policy mistakes had deepened the initial decline and hindered the recovery of the economy, Keynes, who had been influenced by Malthus offered a very different explanation in 1936. Claiming the market economy had collapsed on its own, had become trapped in a vicious circle and could not free itself, he called for government to help (White, 2008, p. 160). Joseph Schumpeter did not personally agree with Keynes' methodological approach, as he applied criticism to most neoclassical theorists who made heavy use of mathematics. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that "critics and admirers of the scientific performance of the late Lord Keynes will agree to the statement that his General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money (1936) was the outstanding success of the 1930's and that it dominated analytic work for a decade after its publication" (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 167).

In a tribute to Alfred Marshall in 1924, Keynes had declared that the day of the theoretical economic treatise had passed and that the modern economist needed to aim for immediate policy relevance in his writings (White, 2008, p. 158). As such, Keynes is attributed significance in the history of economic thought along two lines: his contribution to economic analysis and that to public policy (Hudson, 1985). In his elaborate book 'The History of Economic Analysis', Schumpeter marked a distinction between economic opinion and economic analysis (Schumpeter, 1954). A categorization that authors take up after him and which displays how literature concerned with economic analysis often simultaneously dealt with policy recommendations (Hudson, 1985). In line with these intellectual attempts made from 1930 onwards, the primary objective after World War II was to develop an economic plan that would prevent a repeat of the Great Depression. Various states, including the United States, focussed on full employment, economic growth and the welfare of their citizens, while "fiscal and monetary policies usually dubbed 'Keynesian' were widely deployed to dampen business cycles and to ensure reasonably full employment" (Harvey, 2005, p. 10). The objective of Public Works Programmes here was to create productive employment opportunities to promote both macroeconomic development (stimulating the economy) and social protection outcomes.

## **1.2. Promoting Development Economics**

Based on the success of the Marshall Plan, theories to linear economic growth became prominent in the economic discourse of the 1960s. It was primarily a theory of development, which enabled so-called developing nations to proceed along an economic growth path that historically had been followed by the industrialized nations, making development synonymous with rapid, aggregate economic growth (Todaro & Smith, 2005, p. 111). Literature on poverty in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century had focussed on economic development in Europe and the U.S. while in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the war, publications on economic growth and development remedies for developing countries emerged. In line with this, concepts of basic needs and measurable definitions of poverty rose. At the same time, Amartya Sen sparked the discussion on famine induced by economic inequality and rise in market prices (Dreze & Sen, 1991, p. 13). In 1975, two nationwide programs the “food-for-work program and the rural maintenance program were implemented in Bangladesh to reduce rural poverty, primarily through creation of employment opportunities (Akhter & Zohir, 1995, p. 46). Food-for-work programmes marked a point where public works initiatives increasingly started serving as a safety net programme for food security and working against the effects of crisis shocks and poverty in developing countries.

## **1.3. The Rise of Neo-liberalism**

Up to the late 1970s Keynesian macroeconomic theory dominated the field of economic analysis, one of its main assumptions being that inflation and recession are mutually exclusive (Harvey, 2005). The economic reality in industrialized states soon diverted from this regard by demonstrating a high inflation rate and a slowdown in growth with a steady high rate of unemployment (Brunner & Cukierman, 1980). In essence criticizing Keynes, Milton Friedman commented on how the early job-creating measures in the New Deal in the US of the 1930s might have been appropriate at that time but concurrently theorized if government continued to increase employment it would risk causing accelerated inflation (Friedman & Friedman, 1998, p. 59). With regard to public works initiatives, this posed an economic policy dilemma, since actions designed to lower inflation and reduce unemployment could actually worsen economic growth. Parallel, dependency theorists

embarked on criticizing concepts of Western modernity and the controversial application of linear models to economic growth in the so called Third World (Morgan, 1987).

As the world oil crisis hit during the 1970s, a number of theories developed advocating a social democracy on the one hand and the re-establishment of free market principals on the other. In the 1980s, the latter gained dominance advocating a global economic system today known as neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism assumes that economic growth automatically perpetuates wealth for the total of society, indirectly also benefiting the poor (United Nations, 2010). Leaving the activities for production to the private sector, the neo-liberal scheme was naturally against direct efforts of government to provide employment through Public Works Programmes (MacEwan, 1999, p. 5). Structural Adjustment Plans became a part of foreign aid policies of the U.S and Europe, posing conditionalities on recipient governments in return for IMF and World Bank funding, asking them to replace state-led economic interventionism with market-based mechanisms whilst simultaneously seeking to correct an imbalance between governmental and national income and spending (Olukoshi, 2000).

#### **1.4. Structural Adjustment Plans: The Critique**

Throughout the 1980s, the post development discourse voiced heavy criticism over the structural adjustment plans. Stating that “the dismantling of the previous social development strategies, whilst restraining government spending across the board, the removal of subsidies, cost based pricing for publicly provided goods and services and the cuts in social spending had adversely affected the poor disproportionately” (Melville, 2002, p. 4). In the contrary to what neo-liberalists claimed, prescribing themselves to open market strategies and the pursuit of macroeconomic growth did not bring about the poverty alleviation hoped for in the developing world. Spurring discussions around the unequal distribution of wealth, literature on measures to moderate the marginalizing effects of structural adjustments emerged. Throughout the 1980s, even industrialized countries such as the U.S and the U.K implemented active labour market policies labelled ‘welfare to work’. The term workfare evolved out of a discourse on these policies. Concepts such as welfare and workfare are not further discussed within this thesis as the following literature reviewed is specifically concerned with public works initiatives in developing countries. This

is linked to Public works initiatives receiving a more vivid revival with other safety net remedies targeted to the poor and vulnerable, not only to tackle the arisen food insecurity issues but also to counteract declining wages and reduced employment. “These elements of contraction within adjustment argue for employment-expanding measures parallel to adjustment measures, both limiting the ‘social costs of adjustment’, [...]” (von Braun & Teklu, 1991). Numerous countries on the African continent including Botswana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe implemented labour intensive Public Works Programmes from the 1980s onwards. Titled ‘Labour-intensive Public Works for Food Security: Experiences in Africa’ the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) presented a comparative study on these initiatives in 1991. In its introduction, the report claims:

“Three central problems facing Africa today – food insecurity, growing unemployment, and poor infrastructure- need to be, and can be, addressed simultaneously by appropriate action through labor-intensive public works programs. Labor-intensive public works promise to go a long way towards direct and sustainable poverty alleviation and strengthening of self-help capacities. Targeted food, income, and health interventions, along with public works programs, emerge as complementary instruments for improving economic growth, food availability, and nutrition in many African countries” (von Braun & Teklu, 1991).

Parallel to this, first the World Bank and later the IMF and World Trade Organization declared a commitment to poverty reduction, equity, enhanced participation, pluralism, human rights, and partnership. Critics have claimed that this change in paradigm has largely been a rhetorical one as the main strategy of the Washington Consensus remained in the neo-liberal doctrine to development (Dickson & Sandbrook, 2001, p. 3). Nevertheless, the key objective of social policies was no longer to serve a broader development strategy, but to offer up compensatory schemes devised to mitigate painful outcomes of market-oriented economic policies: There was a shift from universalism to selectivity (United Nations, 2010). This demonstrated a significant change in allocating public works initiatives within the field of social policy. In contrast to being implemented as a government measure for purely tackling an immediate economic crisis, as had been debated in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Public Works Programmes became a part of state intervention against social ills and poverty. The social protection discourse became linked to development theory, especially

for understanding the factors preventing access to economic opportunity and leading to persistent poverty and vulnerability (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009).

### **1.5. Revival of the Public Works Remedy**

Since the early 1990s, against a background of economic crises, structural adjustment and globalization, social protection has increasingly become a distinct policy agenda in middle and low income countries. Accordingly, the theory and practice of social protection in developing countries has advanced at a rapid pace over the last decade. There is a growing consensus within the Bretton Woods institutions around the view that social protection constitutes an effective response to poverty and vulnerability in developing countries, and as such is an essential component of economic and social development strategies (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009). Supporting this broader development strategy, leading economists and researchers affiliated with institutions such as the World Bank, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) embarked on developing definitions and mechanisms for measuring the cost-effectiveness of public employment schemes.

In 1987, research evaluating recent experiences in Public Works Programmes realized in India and Asia had uncovered how conceptual issues undermined the success of these programmes (Sandeep, 1987). In reaction, two years later, the World Bank economist Martin Ravallion remarked that although design issues had been identified as an important reason for some of the programmes failures, there had been little effort by economists to probe these matters analytically. Accordingly, he published a paper which aimed at looking into “these issues within an analytically tractable theoretical framework, in the hope of both illuminating the policy trade-offs and of identifying key empirical questions which will need to be answered when designing specific programs” (Ravallion, 1999, p. 58).

In his article for the *Journal of Development Economics* Ravallion then stated the following key elements as being important for the design of cost effective relief work schemes: the choice of coverage for the scheme, and the choice of the benefit level to participants (Ravallion, 1999). He discussed two possible versions which result in different outcomes, the one guaranteeing employment at a potentially low wage for a large number of participants and the other guaranteeing adequate incomes for a restricted number of participants. In a

later publication in 1999, he described a “good workfare programme” encompassing the following attributes: a wage rate no higher than the market wage for unskilled manual labour, avoidance of restrictions on eligibility for participating in the programme, high labour intensity for project development and they should be targeted to poor areas to ensure maximum value for poor people (Ravallion, 1999).

Another prominent World Bank economist at that time, Kalanidhi Subbarao contributed to the field by writing a comparative article titled “Public Works as an Anti-Poverty Program: An Overview of Cross-Country Experience”. In this, he described how public works initiatives function as a safety net in low-income developing countries by conferring transfer and/or stabilization benefits to the poor, while at the same time using the poor's labor to build infrastructure for development” (Subbarao, 1997, p. 678). He also discussed how the financial scale of a programme, its duration, timing and allocated wage rate delivered different outcomes in the diverse initiatives (Subbarao, 1997, p. 683). These are key elements that both authors discuss throughout their publications and which reappear in the literature compiled after them. A huge amount of literature has been generated on the topic since the revival of public works initiatives in the 1980s; trying to critically review it in its totality lies outside of the scope of this thesis. However, looking at the literature compiled since the 1990s; there are some apparent commonalities and important trends which are discussed in the following chapter.

## **1.6. Debating Definitions and Design**

Apart from often ambiguously using different terminologies such as Public Works Programmes, labour-intensive initiatives or workfare programmes, the authors writing between 1990 and 2008 largely claim that antipoverty programmes can specifically benefit developing countries in handling developmental and emergency crises. It is challenging to find authors that are genuinely critical of the public works concept. Above all, the papers evolve around discussing the cost efficiency, coverage and adequate targeting of implemented programmes in sub-Saharan Africa or Asia. Authors mostly fall short on offering an underlying systematic concept to these programmes or evaluating their actual applicability. This section critically contextualizes this viewpoint by reviewing the different contributions of the authors and referring to the evaluation of the NPWP programme in

South Africa, emphasizing how concepts and recommendations for Public Works Programmes remained rather loosely defined until authors from 2008 onwards made the attempt of developing clear categorizations.

Ten years after pronouncing the need for research in the field of work programmes, Ravallion recognized that adequately analysing public works initiatives remained challenging: “[public works] interventions are relatively complex and difficult to evaluate” (Ravallion, 1999, p. 31). In response, he developed an economic rapid appraisal tool to help “obtain a reasonably credible and yet rapid assessment of the likely gains to the poor from a given outlay on a workfare program” (Ravallion, 1999, p. 32). His tool found immediate recognition by Lawrence Haddad and Michelle Adato at the International Food Policy Research Institute in 2001, who applied and extended it to measure the cost-effectiveness of public works initiatives under the NPWP in the Western Cape, South Africa. Their research found that applying the tool to the NPWP initiatives in the Western Cape demonstrated how public works projects outperformed pure cash transfer programmes (Haddad & Adato, 2001, p. 3). Nevertheless, their evaluation of the implementation of the NPWP revealed that it had “not [been] well-targeted in terms of poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure (Adato & Haddad, 2002, p. 31).

In reference to the general debate around allocating public works wages below-market wage to improve targeting, they describe how in South Africa the “historical role of labour unions and their voice in government has meant that setting wage rates below the market wage has been more controversial than in many other countries” (Adato & Haddad, 2002, p. 32). They illustrate their argument with reference to the experiences at a project level, where workers initially accepted the offered public works wage but after learning about wages for comparable work paid in the formal sector went to strike for a raise. On the basis of their findings, they conclude how government officials and contractors preferred to pay higher wages than deal with labour strife (Adato & Haddad, 2002, p. 32). This raises an important issue concerning the wage debate. In South Africa the demand for job opportunities under the Public Works Programmes exceeds the supply of positions available under the programme. The notion that the wage rate can be adjusted (meaning lowered) to self-target the poorest is not only unfeasible, but also unethical as it contravenes the progressive legislation in South Africa on minimum wages and decent work (HSRC, 2007).

Questionable in this regard is also the avoidance of restrictions for participation in the programme as propagated by Ravallion,. not all those willing and eligible to participate have an equal chance of receiving work under the programme. This could attest that allocating the wage for public works initiatives below market wage, as it has been systematically advocated, is not applicable in the case of the public works initiatives implemented in South Africa unless there is intervention and political organisation at a local level in support of the policy.

In addition, McCord further contributes to the wage debate by remarking that the direct connection between the poor and Public Works Programmes has been taken for granted:

“[...] there is frequently an underlying assumption that if wages are correctly set, the transfer will reach the poor, despite the fact that there is little data or analysis exploring targeting efficiency in terms of whether programme participants are the poorest, or even the poor (McCord, 2003).

Adato and Haddad do not critically engage with this argument in their findings. They conclude their paper with recommendations to the provincial government of the Western Cape on how to prioritize the allocation of resources and improve the institutional capacity of the programme (Adato & Haddad, 2002).

Discussing Adato and Haddad, McCord further depicts how economic analysis both in South Africa and internationally had focused “almost exclusively on the evaluation of Public Works Programmes in terms of the efficiency of transfers under Public Works Programmes, rather than assessing the efficacy of the transfers in terms of direct or indirect microeconomic impact on participating households, and the ability of such programmes to achieve the anticipated impacts in the social, economic and labour market spheres” (McCord, 2003, p. 4).

In response to the lack of an underlying systematic concept to Public Works Programmes, Subbarao stated: “There is much confusion about the meaning and scope of public works programs (also known as workfare programs) across countries” (Subbarao, 2003, p. 2). Attempting a systematic conceptualization, the economist Stephen Devereux from the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex wrote a discussion paper on how, in spite of coming under criticism public works initiatives continue to be relevant for



creating employment and uplifting poverty if they are adequately designed. Initially recognizing that:

“the effectiveness of Public Works Programmes in alleviating poverty can be compromised in various ways, including: poor targeting, low wages, limited coverage, temporary employment creation, low-quality or poorly maintained infrastructure, and unintended negative impacts (e.g. undermining food security by competing with labour needs in agriculture, or condoning child labour” (Devereux, 2002, p. 1).

He argues that the apparent lack of clear conceptualization and failure to differentiate between two categories of Public Works Programmes and their different objectives had resulted in their criticism, which is often unfair or misdirected. He emphasises that there is a distinction between two types of publicly funded employment programmes. The first type focusses on labour-intensive employment programmes which maximise short-term employment creation usually as a response to crisis. The second type is a self-targeting means of identifying the poor for income transfers. These are labour-based employment programmes that give attention to the objective of asset creation – especially infrastructure creation or maintenance and the objective of employment creation (Devereux, 2002). He uses the two categories to examine the outcomes of different Public Works Programmes in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The categorisation and examination of the case studies form the basis of Devereux’s overarching theoretical analysis of how employment programmes have functioned. Considering the wage debate mentioned above in which Public Works Programmes stand accused of paying unethically low wages (or subsistence rations) for self-targeting reasons, he describes how public works wages are becoming increasingly market related and alternative targeting mechanisms – such as community selection, or job rotation – are preferred (Devereux, 2002, p. 34). Subsequently, he elaborates in more detail how there is an increased need to invest into institutional capacity (local level government) to ensure the efficient implementation of a Public Works Programme (Devereux & Solomon, 2006, p. 10). Compared to Subbarao’s and Ravallion’s earlier contributions to the field, his categorization offers a more nuanced outline of how and under which parameters public works initiatives have delivered to their specific objectives: “Employment-based safety nets can and do achieve important welfarist goals; labour-based infrastructure programmes can and do achieve important developmental goals” (Devereux, 2002, p. 34). Nevertheless, like

his fellow writers he does not fundamentally question the applicability of public works initiatives as long as their objectives are matched with an adequate design.

A further consistency within the literature appearing from the 1990s onwards is the elaboration of indirect benefits public works initiatives promote in their implementation and the need for direct community<sup>2</sup> participation in the programmes. This is of particular relevance because authors reviewing food security programmes in Africa cautioned to aim at achieving multiple objectives through one type of project as it resulted in none of the objectives being satisfactorily achieved (Sijm, 1997). All the same, the articulation and adoption of the Millennium Goals in 2000 reintroduced poverty reduction and other human development objectives and placed them at centre stage. In line with the previously described paradigm shift in Development Economics which was induced by the discourse on Post-Development, targeting wider social objectives and community empowerment became a part of the agenda for Public Works Programmes.

In his early articles Subbarao had only briefly depicted how work programmes in addition to generating employment had significantly influenced poverty and social gains particularly for women (Subbarao, 1997, p. 682f). In 1999, Ravallion elaborated to a larger extent how delivering infrastructure to poor communities through public works initiatives enhanced indirect social benefits. He also considered community involvement for determining the public works projects and drawing on local labourers as desirable for a successful programme implementation (Ravallion, 1999, p. 44f), but did not look further into the matter. From 2000 onwards, publications stress a terminology calling for participation and community empowerment: “community-driven development is indelible in the development landscape” (Adato & Haddad, 2005, p. 1). This being based on the increasing recognition that top-down, technocratic forms of development imposed on diverse local realities often resulted in failure (Adato & Haddad, 2005, p. 4). As such, Public Works Programmes have been ascribed increasingly ambitious objectives in recent years, in terms of both scale and range of impacts. Again critical of this development, McCord points out that:

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘community’ is used in the context of the prevalence this expression holds in the literature concerning Public Works Programmes. The author does not agree with the cultural implications of the term but will not critically engage on this within this thesis.

“[...] the positive impacts of non-wage benefits to the poor deriving, for example, from the asset created under the programme, or improved labour market access as a result of experience and training received in Public Works Programmes, are often assumed as an article of faith, rather than on the basis of empirical data” (McCord, 2003, p. 4).

What appears as a commonality in the literature is the way authors (predominantly economists) follow the logic of acknowledging the difficulties public works initiatives in developing countries have encountered to then systematically conclude that these downfalls can be eliminated by improving the design, cost efficiency and institutional capacity of these programmes. Not much investigation is put into highlighting the nature of the unemployment crisis in developing countries and the applicability of short-term labour market policies, such as Public Works Programmes to adequately address them. Remembering the historical origins of Public Works Programmes as an ad-hoc economic policy tool for times of an acute crisis, one has to question or at least discuss their appropriateness for long-term structural unemployment and poverty persevering in low-income countries. Nevertheless, looking at the example of Public Works Programmes in South Africa, the NPWP and EPWP have maintained that they significantly benefit the poor through both employment opportunities and indirect wider social attributes (Public Works, 2009). This brings up the question why in spite of the challenges and critique Public Works Programmes have been confronted with, policy makers in countries like South Africa continue to advocate and justify the implementation of these initiatives? In an attempt to understand this, the following section describes how the lack of clarity in the concept of Public Works Programmes along with ideological preferences and political motives, have led to continued proliferation of these initiatives.

### **1.7. Vague Concepts**

Keynes argument for more policy relevance in economic theorizing might have been appropriate for his time however since Ravallion called for analytical scrutiny in 1999, surprisingly little substantial progress has been made by economists in clearly conceptualizing Public Works Programmes. Regarding early authors such as Hard, who had proposed quite sophisticated details on how to efficiently design a Public Works Programme almost a century ago, ideas around state led employment creation have not considerably

changed since World Bank authors 'revived' the debate. Nevertheless, in 2009 Subbarao once again stated:

"The long history, varying motivations, and the complexity of the program's many design features render the program less amenable to an understanding of what makes the program a success, and under what country circumstances, and when is the program likely to serve as a good candidate to accomplish the outcomes expected of it" (Subbarao & Ninno, 2009, p. 2)

Although Devereux had offered a more distinct categorization than his immediate predecessors did, his concept did not critically explore the suitability of Public Works Programmes for the context of low income countries. McCord refers to this as a "critical knowledge gap in terms of social protection programme design and implementation, which is currently filled using rules of thumb and ideologically driven preferences" (Slater & McCord, 2009, p. 48). As a result, terminologies are often used interchangeably while the expression Public Works Programme has become an umbrella term for diverse employment creation and safety net initiatives with very different objectives or outcomes. Having gained considerable prominence in the field, McCord brings an important argument in a 2008 paper. Referring to the conceptual confusion prevailing in the discourse of Public Works Programmes, she claims:

"[The] result of this lack of clarity is the repeated implementation of PWPs offering only a single short term episode of employment in low and middle income countries where unemployment is principally structural, an intervention which is unlikely to offer significant or sustained social protection benefits for participants" (McCord, 2008, p. 2).

The key argument here is that the conceptual confusion and theoretical inaccuracy of the authors writing on Public Works Programmes has led to inappropriate policy choices, errors in programme design and unrealistic expectations on the part of policy implementers especially in developing countries. The monolithic application of Public Works Programmes raises concerns for the social protection function these programmes offer. All the same, these programmes are prescribed by donor agencies (such as the World Bank etc.) and governments alike to counteract situations of chronic poverty and are supported by the literature to do so:

“Regardless of the nature of funding, sustainability or otherwise and geographic location, there is ample evidence to suggest PWPs have played a significant role in mitigating the impact of negative income shocks, provided care is taken to create an implementation structure, draw up a shelf of projects, and communities are involved in their selection. Our review does show that well designed and implemented PWPs can help mitigating income shocks and being used as effective anti-poverty instruments” (Subbarao & Ninno, 2009, p. 60).

The policy documentation in support of such programmes repeatedly indicates that governments and donors implementing them anticipate these policy actions to have a significant social protection function that results in sustained improvements in livelihoods and poverty reduction. Public Work Programmes are widely assumed to represent the appropriate instrument for this, but in reality, they rarely employ more than a small fraction of poor households with access to labour at any one time. The low coverage of almost all programmes means that the extent of ‘social protection’ offered by these initiatives rarely matches their ‘political’ role in the social protection discourse (McCord, 2008). The argument that these short term interventions like the EPWP do not provide sufficient employment, work experience or training to actually integrate its participants into the labour market is also gravely neglected (HSRC, 2007). These aspects reveal how ranges of ideological and political factors inform the preference for Public Work Programmes.

### **1.8. Justifying the Means with the Cause**

From the beginning, the World Bank was decisively involved in the debate around social protection in developing countries. It conceptualizes social protection as social risk management. The emphasis on risk assumes that vulnerability to hazards is a significant constraint on economic and human development, and that efforts to reduce the likelihood of hazards, or to ameliorate their effects on living standards, are essential for economic growth and development. As such, the World Bank proposes policies that seek “to assist individuals, households and communities in better managing income risks” (Holzmann & Sherburne-Benz, 2003). Within this framework, there are three main categories for risk management: informal arrangements, market-based arrangements and public arrangements. State led Public Works Programmes form a part of the third category. The Bank confidently boasts that the Social Risk Management Framework “is finally an approach which aligns the development interest of ministers of finance with those of ministers of

labor, social insurance, welfare, or wherever Social Protection issues are institutionally allocated in a country” (Holzmann & Sherburne-Benz, 2003, p. 5). It also states how international institutions, such as the above quoted International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) have adopted the Social Risk Management framework in their research and policy agenda (Holzmann & Sherburne-Benz, 2003). In this regard, recommending Public Works Programmes is integrated into the broader economic development advice the Bank and institutions such as the IFPRI give to governments in developing countries. Hence, in spite of the above-mentioned concerns in the literature, authors like Subbarao continue to claim:

“The potential of the PWP program is enormous both in countries that have experiences with these programs and especially in countries that never used them. Our review has shown that many countries have not implemented the program even though their circumstances make them eminently suited for such a program” (Subbarao & Ninno, 2009, p. 62).

In conclusion, governments in developing countries are influenced by a dominate production of knowledge legitimizing the policy recommendations stemming from the Bretton Wood institutions or partner organisations of United Nations. The debate on knowledge and development reveals particularly well how profoundly the notion of knowledge, the practice of its creation and its use is affected by political forces (Weiler, 2002, p. 1). Tara Das draws attention to how “by identifying issues as social problems and representing them in specific ways through information dissemination, lending requirements and projects, the World Bank significantly influences country public debates and policymaking” (Das, 2009, p. 209). A current example of this influence in connection with the EPWP in South Africa is the involvement of the ILO in the programme:

“It [the EPWP] was further developed under the auspices of the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), an ILO programme which supports governments, employers, unions and community-based organizations to enhance investment in infrastructure development and improve community access to basic goods and services”<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> ILO website: [http://www.ilo.org/jobspact/news/WCMS\\_151955/lang--es/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/jobspact/news/WCMS_151955/lang--es/index.htm)

In the light of the current global economic crisis, voices calling for state intervention in labour market affairs and social policy are becoming prominent again. Considering the South African economic situation the issue around the applicability of jobless growth policies and programmes of the 1930s are strongly disputed and remain unresolved. Some authors reject the applicability of jobless growth for t South Africa.t Others claim to be able to prove the contrary. Both approaches argue that South Africa is not coping well with the backlog of unemployment and underemployment (Biyase & Bonga-Bonga, 2007, p. 14). Beyond this discussion, an increase of structural unemployment phenomena throughout the world poses new challenges for economic policymaking and pressurizes policy makers to find political and economic solutions alike. In response, the G20 leaders attending London Summit in April 2009 stated:

“To support those affected by the crisis by creating employment opportunities and through income support measures” and “to build a fair and family-friendly labour market for both women and men”, through measures such as “active labour market policies” (G20 leaders’ statement, The Global Plan for Recovery and Reform, London, 2 April 2009, paragraph 26<sup>4</sup>).

This brings the discussion around state led employment creation back to the forefront of the economic policy debate and it is regaining prominence for finding resolutions to the current economic crisis weighing on industrialized and developing countries alike. Therefore it is no surprise that international organisations such as the International Labor Organisation (ILO) have engaged in contributing to the knowledge-production for finding these resolutions. To support States and social partners to reach the goal of achieving “full and productive work for all, including women and young people”, the ILO has placed employment at the centre of economic and social policies. Since 2003, it has been engaged in the implementation of a Global Employment Agenda “through a large range of technical support and capacity building activities, advisory services and policy research” (Lieuw-Kie-Song & Philip, 2010, p. 5).

Steering away from the course of orthodox neo-liberalist notions to economic development this renewed orientation towards state interventionism has also become relevant for the economic strategy pursued in South Africa. After demonstrating how and under which

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<sup>4</sup> Counsil on Foreign Relations publication: <http://www.cfr.org/financial-crises/g20-global-plan-recovery-reform-april-2009/p19017>

influences the definition, concept and implementation of public works initiatives have developed, the next chapters focus on contextualizing the South African economic strategy within this analytical framework to draw attention to the international influence under which South African policy makers have implemented Public Works Programmes since the political transition in 1994.

## **2. CONVENTIONAL CHOICES AND PRECAST WAYS**

One cannot understand nor critique the prominence of state funded Public Works Programmes without understanding the post 1994 economic strategies of South Africa. This chapter explains to what extent economic policy choices in the Reconstruction Development Plan (RDP) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) have been influenced and drafted according to the policy advice of international neo-liberal orientated fiscal institutions such as the World Bank and IMF.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been involved in South Africa for years. Before the political transition 1994, the IMF paid out an \$850 million loan to the interim government, known as the Transitional Executive Council. The loan bound Pretoria to cutting government deficit spending and reducing wages. As a result the ANC signed the statement of policies to the IMF and the Reconstruction and Development Programme became less progressive than originally anticipated (Bond, 2003, p. 144). By 1999, the self-proclaimed role of the World Bank was to partner with government and other parties in South Africa by exchanging knowledge on how to promote higher growth and employment while fostering social and environmental sustainability for South Africa (World Bank, 1999). In the light of the critique confronting the Bretton Woods institutions during the 1990s, this demonstrated new self-proclaimed advisory role came as no surprise. In the strategy paper 'South Africa Country Assistance Strategy: Building a Knowledge Partnership' the World Bank stated: "Since the 1994 elections, South Africa has provided the Bank with a unique opportunity to pilot our evolving role as a "knowledge bank" (World Bank, 1999, p. 1). Since then, it has primarily shared development knowledge with the post-apartheid government supporting it in policies for water, public works and macroeconomics. All of this advice was excessively neo-liberal in orientation and as elaborated before, failed to deliver (Bond, 2003, p. 143). Apart from their public presentation little has changed in the core neo-liberal



ideology of these institutions; the IMF and World Bank continue to offer advice on economic policymaking and capacity building based on these principles to the South African government until today. This on-going influence of political advice features prominently in the preceding and current South African economic strategy. Focussing on macro-economic growth was not only adapted in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the transitional government in 1994, it was even more so apparent in the 'Growth, Employment and Redistribution' (GEAR) programme implemented from 1996 onwards (Dickson & Sandbrook, 2001, p. 8). Looking at the authors of the GEAR document reveals that World Bank economists were significantly involved in its conception (Department of Finance, 2003). It contained ambitious targets for the South African economy. Apart from stipulating that, by the year 2000, the economy was to generate a sustainable six percent average growth rate and 400,000 new jobs each year. High levels of new investment, in particular foreign direct investment were expected to support rapid economic growth, which in turn, would create thousands of jobs. These two features, high growth and rapid job creation would then allow South Africa to overcome the persistent inequalities that apartheid had left behind and growth would allow for the eventual expansion of social services, the provision of infrastructure and job creation would raise the incomes of ordinary South Africans (Heintz, 2003, p. 2). Integrated within this strategy the GEAR document recommended labour intensive initiatives as means for providing "jobs and training opportunities to a significant proportion of the unemployed poor through well designed and carefully managed public works projects"<sup>5</sup>.

It is important to note that there is a dispute amongst economists as to the level of post-apartheid economic growth. Some argue that whilst economic growth was generally positive between 1996 and 2002, it did not grow to the levels forecast by GEAR. Others argue that growth in employment has consistently been negative (Heintz, 2003). A Department of Finance Report on GEAR states that in the context of three percent growth, and without significant improvements in labour absorption coefficients, it is doubtful whether annual job creation much in excess of 100 000 would be possible over the next five years. This estimate takes into account about 20 000 additional jobs created per annum in response to various employment-intensive public expenditure programmes such as land

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<sup>5</sup>GEAR document accessible under: <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70507>

reform, low cost housing, community water and municipal infrastructure (Department of Finance, 2003).

The debate around “Jobless growth” points to serious concerns that current economic policies have failed to translate even modest levels of growth into real social benefits. It also questions to what extent South Africa’s public works initiatives are successful in combating large-scale unemployment and poverty. GEAR stresses socio-economic service delivery to help alleviate poverty. However, it’s overriding objective to reduce the budget deficit to 3% of gross domestic product by the year 2000 stands in contrast to this intention. Long-term outcomes of macro-economic growth focussed development have shown that increasing the gross domestic product (GDP) does not directly translate into the reduction of poverty and marginalization nor do self-regulating markets and neo-liberal concepts generate the effects they promised (Gutman, 2003). Nevertheless, the South African government continued to pursue a political agenda dedicated to these economic principles: “the general direction of economic policy is towards greater openness and competitiveness, the economy will thus become increasingly subject to global forces” (Department of Finance, 2003, p. 19). African scholars have referred to this process as subordination to foreign capital investment and the Washington Consensus. This confirms the over-riding importance of international pressure. They claim that this form of policy making demonstrates how the South African government has been reduced to the role of a “peripheral state within a world capitalist economy [which] performs principally as an instrument of ‘adjustment’ to the changing demands of global accumulation” (Bratton, 1989, p. 418). The effects of this increased economic liberalisation whilst relying on ‘trickle down effects’ for the impoverished in society have been devastating (Habib, 2005, p. 682).

As explained in previous chapters, neo-liberal policy-making and pro-growth economic strategizing have been under attack by the post-development discourse specifically because of their limited outcomes for alleviating poverty and unemployment. This condemnation is supported by the criticism voiced on the effects of Structural Adjustment Plans and although South Africa was not subjected to them by the World Bank or IMF, GEAR has been labelled a home-grown economic structural adjustment programme, similar to those imposed on poor countries by these institutions throughout the 1980s and 90s (Bond, 2003). This brings a question to mind; is the South African government an example of those policy makers

described who have been led to believe introducing labour intensive Public Works Programmes will substantially counteract the rising inequality induced through neo-liberal economic policies?

This assumption seems reasonable, considering the controversial promotion and legitimization of public works initiatives for developing countries as it is spearheaded by literature stemming from international institutions. However, it would be presumptuous to believe that South African politicians have unmindfully implemented the NPWP and EPWP. Possibly, they are aware of the limited outcomes these programmes offer for the South African context but considering the global economic forces resolve to the internationally recommended strategies. Remembering the desolate state of the economy in South Africa in 1994, it comes as no surprise that the new government turned to international donor agencies for financial support and neo-liberally orientated policies to development. In addition to this, the leading party remains under political pressure to demonstrate action against the persevering historically induced inequalities and mass unemployment. There are some indicators that policy makers introduce public works initiatives with a political motive. A job-creating programme can serve as a visible government response to unemployment or a poverty crisis with the aim of promoting political stabilisation and electoral support (Dreze & Sen, 1991, p. 96). Walt Whitman Rostow brings an example of how the New Deal in the U.S of the 1930s was a political response for the society frustrated by severe and chronic unemployment demonstrating how Public Works Programmes not only have an economic or social but also a political dimension (Rostow, 1959, p. 82). Either way, to gain more clarity on to what extend the Public Works Programmes have been over politicized in relation to their actual outcomes the following section critically summarizes how the NPWP and EPWP have (or have not) delivered to their proclaimed objectives.

### **2.1. Celebrating the Success**

Subbarao asserts that Public Works Programmes are designed as a major anti-poverty program to provide substantive income support to poor families in countries with a large segment of poor unemployed or underemployed workers. As a successful example of this, he describes the South African EPWP as a successful example of how this programme can work against the structural unemployment:

“They provide work and training opportunities to more than one million people a year in four different sectors: a) infrastructure for labour-intensive construction and maintenance of low-volume roads, storm water drains, trenching for pipelines and sidewalks; b) environmental land rehabilitation, coastline cleanup and recycling program; c) Social care for aids patients and early childhood development; and d) economic participation in micro-enterprises learner ship program. The average length of the participation goes from four months in the infrastructure sector to over one year, thus providing a steady income for those beneficiaries” (Subbarao & Ninno, 2009, p. 7).

His description of the programmes goals might be accurate. But undermining the analytical credibility of his discussion paper, authors critically evaluating Public Works Programmes in South Africa fundamentally disagree with his conclusions. Looking at the design and intentions of both the NPWP and EPWP reveals how their strategy makes use of the design attributes emphasized in the discourse on Public Works Programmes. They theoretically encompass all of the key elements and the political support, especially for the EPWP, has been significant. Research evaluating these programmes has come to substantially different conclusions.

In 2003 the SALDRU, at the University of Cape Town looked into the performance of public works initiatives in South Africa since 1996 for significantly responding to the South African employment crisis. The paper concluded that the data available at that time did not show the anticipated broader benefits of Public Works Programmes in terms of increased livelihoods, reduced poverty, creation of sustainable employment, community empowerment, local multipliers, or growth as outlined in the policy rhetoric (McCord, 2003). In terms of the employment created, the outcomes of the programmes had been limited due to the scale of budgetary allocations and institutional constraints relating to programme conceptualisation and project management capacity.

In reaction to the discussion about the implementation of the EPWP held at that time, the report cautioned policy makers by forecasting the limited outcomes to be expected from the new programme. Apart from estimating that the EPWP would need a budget between R17 and R28 billion per annum to offer part time employment to a calculated significant number of 3.2 million workers, it predicted that such a programme was unlikely to meet the wider set of sustainable social development and economic objectives set out in the policy

discourse (McCord, 2003). All the same, the EPWP was implemented in 2003 and labelled a success in its five-year report of 2008.

Boasting to be “a proudly South African solution to an African quandary”, the EPWP claimed to be “reaching deeply into the fabric of south African communities” (Public Works, 2009, p. xi). A mid-term review of EPWP in 2007 painted a different picture, reiterating that its social protection objectives were too ambitious: “the EPWP is a hybrid programme encapsulating multiple models and objectives and this is reducing likelihood of success in terms of its overall goal of poverty alleviation” (HSRC, 2007, p. 36). Furthermore, the budget and scope of the programme continued to be too small to have significant impact: “the EPWP does not match South Africa’s economic context -it offers once off short term work opportunities when the problem is structural unemployment” (HSRC, 2007, p. 37). This also tampered with the principle of increasing the employability of workers through skills development and work experience, as these measures have not helped participants to gain employment after the intervention. The evidence of the research reveals that skills training through active labour market programmes and work placements has a poor record and is only effective if employment is actually available for low to medium skilled labour, which as highlighted before is not the case in the South African context (HSRC, 2007, p. 37).

In drafting the way forward for the second phase of the EPWP, the Five-year report acknowledged some of the challenges that had come up in the review. It admitted that the scale of the programme needed to be expanded significantly in order to make its contribution to the government goal of halving unemployment by 2014. It also recognized that the duration of the work opportunities created by the programme had been generally shorter than expected, limiting the income transfers to each beneficiary. In reaction, the report proclaimed that EPWP was projected to grow to three times its current size within the next five years, aiming at creating 4.5 million temporary work opportunities in this time span (Public Works, 2009, p. 137f). This target still remained substantially below the 3.2 million work opportunities estimated as necessary in the mentioned SALDRU report of 2003.

Another issue in regard to the political advocacy of South Africa’s Public Works Programmes is to what extent statistics generated on the outcomes of the EPWP whitewash the effects the programme has actually had in reality. Looking at local media publications, public

statements stemming from government officials predominately evolve around stating the success the EPWP has had in terms of creating work opportunities. In an online article titled “Public Works jobs programmes exceeds targets” from the Mail & Guardian on June 21 in 2011, the chief acting operating officer of the Department of Transport and Public Works, Butcher Matutle is quoted saying: “that the work opportunities created so far by phase two [of the EPWP] was greater than the 1.1-million target that had been set for the end of the second year of phase two”<sup>6</sup>. The political opposition criticizes this form of reporting:

“Whether these were actual jobs that had been created and not 'opportunities' to which the department quickly shifted to referencing, and whether or not these jobs were long term, sustainable or imparted skills to any of the EPWP job creation beneficiaries is highly unlikely and remain unclear”<sup>7</sup>.

The critique here is appropriate, as one does need to consider the fact that a ‘work opportunity’ (as defined in the EPWP Five Year Report) constitutes any continuous period of employment of any person. Thus, if one person has performed one day’s work in the EPWP, it is regarded as one work opportunity. Similarly, if the person works for 100 days it is considered one work opportunity. However, if a person works in the programme for one day, skips a week, and is then employed for one more day, this is counted as two work opportunities (Pasensie, 2011). All the same, counting work opportunities provides government officials with a measurable and presentable statistic for the programme’s success.

Taking into account the controversial role Public Works Programmes have taken in the policy discourse for developing countries and considering the continued political endorsement of these initiatives, in spite of their doubted applicability to the South African context, a critical question remains: How has the EPWP impacted its actual participants at the grass roots of society? Research in cooperation with the provincial government of the Western Cape looked into this matter through a case study conducted in 2010.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-06-21-public-works-jobs-programme-exceeds-targets>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.da.org.za/newsroom.htm?action=view-news-item&id=7863>

### 3. THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

The EPWP Unit in the Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW) is responsible for the overall coordination of the EPWP. The EPWP implementation is structured into four sectors which each focus on different targets under the framework<sup>8</sup>:

Infrastructure sector:	Increasing the labour intensity of government-funded infrastructure projects.
Environmental sector:	Creating work opportunities in public environmental programmes (e.g. Working for Water).
Social sector:	Creating work opportunities in public social programmes (e.g. community-based health and social welfare care and early childhood development).
Non-State sector:	Involving local organisations to support initiatives that create employment, in ways that build public or community level goods and services.

Under the coordination of the EPWP Unit, the different government departments are responsible for the various sector-orientated projects. This is illustrated in the allocation of responsibilities, for example, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the EPWP in the environment sector; whilst, the Department of Social Development is responsible for the socially orientated project implementations, and so forth.

Under the Provincial Minister of Transport and Public Works in the Western Cape, a Construction Industry Innovation and Empowerment Unit (CIIEU) is responsible for driving innovations in the implementation of the EPWP in the province<sup>9</sup>. Speaking to government officials from this unit revealed that programmes under the NPWP had already been challenging in their implementation process and several problems, such as stakeholder involvement etc. still persevered in operating of the EPWP (Field note V). In response to

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<sup>8</sup> Available on the EPWP website: <http://www.epwp.gov.za/index.asp?c=About>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.westerncape.gov.za/other/2011/3/paia\\_manual\\_transport\\_and\\_public\\_works\\_2011.pdf](http://www.westerncape.gov.za/other/2011/3/paia_manual_transport_and_public_works_2011.pdf)

these impediments, the CIIEU engaged in generating an Empowerment Impact Assessment tool (EmplIA). Serving as an extension of the Preferential Procurement Implementation Plan 2003 of the Department of Transport and Public Works, the EmplIA alleges to evaluate the empowerment impact of potential interventions. The appointment of EmplIA consultants serves to inform the design and construction process of specific municipal projects under the EPWP framework (Department of Transport and Public Works, 2010). The tool was revised in 2010 and once more, the need for further research into the performance of the EPWP implementation process was identified. The CIIEU wished to investigate how the social impact and sustainability of the EPWP could be enhanced. Considering the described deficit of research looking into to the actual micro-level performance of the EPWP and the effects it has had for local participants, looking into a case study became the key focus point for a research cooperation between myself and the CIIEU.

To be able to understand the procedures at the various levels of the EPWP implementation and to detect the related challenges arising in the process, the research design focussed on accompanying and interviewing different entities and individuals involved in an EPWP process at a chosen location. Selecting a case study and applying participatory methods, findings were expected to respond to the claims in the literature and give a qualitative insight into the local reality of the EPWP process as it is being implemented by the DTPW in the Western Cape. In July 2010, the DTPW selected the development of the landfill site in the Northern suburbs of a city in the Western Cape as an EPWP municipal project. The choice was specifically based on the expectation that the project would be able to deliver to the EPWP mandate and respectively the EmplIA targets of engaging local labour while improving the socio-economic conditions of the local participants involved. Of particular interest here was the possible targeting of the inhabitants living in informal settlements close to the landfill site. Considering these claims, this project served as the case study for the investigation into the local level performance of the EPWP in the Western Cape.

### **3.1. Research Design and Methodology**

#### *3.1.1. Participatory Observation*

This included attending a workshop at the Department of Transport and Public Works for the EmplIA consultants and accompanying the field officers of the Informal Settlement



Management of a suburb on their daily routine. The technique of participatory observation was particularly valuable for gaining an insight into everyday local level government procedures in the area and offered concrete information on how policies are being implemented into practice. This perspective was chosen to look into how the EPWP and EmplA were actually delivering to their mandate. Participatory observation helped reveal local contexts, relationships and behaviour patterns and by doing so provided information previously unknown to the DTPW. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the method is inherently subjective as it relies on the observations and interpretations of the researcher. To counteract this degree of subjectivity, we as the researchers continuously discussed and matched the observations we made during the fieldwork. The limitations of micro-analysis for drawing generalized conclusions were acknowledged by questioning or supporting the findings with the cited literature and research relevant to the field examined.

### *3.1.2. Semi-structured Interviews*

This part of the research focused on gaining direct information from individuals at an administrative and local level of the EPWP initiatives from the DTPW. While questionnaires operate with a fixed set of questions, which can inhibit ingenuous responses, the conducted semi-structured interviews helped to avoid preconceptions of the local reality on the side of the researchers and in our case gave more autonomy to the responding individuals. Starting with an introductory question to guide the interview, the respondent could then place the emphasis on what he or she found relevant to the topic. This contributed to gaining specific local knowledge, which might have remained concealed in a more structured interview. Using this interview technique was vital for gaining information on the landfill case, as several individuals from different social backgrounds were involved in diverse ways in the EPWP implementation process there. A possible downfall of this technique can be the high inter-subjectivity of the participants, as the emphasis lies in their personal context. In this case, it gave a valuable overview of how complex the impact of the EPWP can be from the policy implementation at a macro-level in government, right down to the local stakeholders targeted through the programme.

### *3.1.3. Fieldwork*

Ten days were allocated to researching in the field, hence on and around the landfill site. Considering our safety, government authorities advised us to accompany field officers from the housing department during their daily visits to the informal settlements. On the one hand, this was helpful in order to gain the trust of the local people. Their relationship towards the officials was friendly and we needed a translator for communication. On the other hand, we cannot be certain if the responses we received were biased because of the presence of these government officials.

### **3.2. Limitations**

Time constraints prevented us from spending extensive time with the local people living around the landfill. The information gained was mainly based on ad-hoc interviews conducted on site while driving around. In addition to this, the ten days allocated for fieldwork did not allow us to follow up the implementation process of the EPWP at the landfill site. Therefore, the findings in this thesis focus on giving an overview of the process as it was at the given time when the research was conducted.

### **3.3. Ethical Considerations**

Due to the contact and social interaction with individuals and collectives during the fieldwork following ethical concerns were taken into consideration:

- Taking part in the everyday working or living environment of the different individuals involved in or impacted by the implementation of the EPWP, my presence and research inquiries can influence and even compromise the interpersonal relationships between these different individuals (for example between housing officials and the inhabitants of informal settlements). Being transparent and open about the research and being clear about the role different individuals played in it was of utmost importance for the fieldwork.
- When relying on a government official as a translator, the integrity of their position and their personal relationship towards others was protected.
- When choosing covert research methods participants were not deliberately misled and an adequate, truthful response on the research motives was given upon inquiry.

- It was up to the discretion of the participants what they wished to convey about their personal lives and experiences, the extent of research remained subject to their right to privacy.
- My individual characteristics as a researcher (gender, skin color, language etc.) most probably in an unintentional manner shaped the social interactions within the fieldwork. Throughout the research self-reflectivity and keeping the respect for the mind-set and values of the involved individuals or collectives was essential for making the findings as genuine as possible.
- The identity of the individuals partaking throughout the research was kept confidential at all times.
- When engaging with minors the consent of their parental guardian was obtained beforehand.

### **3.4. Summary of Fieldwork**

Accompanying field officers from the Informal Settlement Management to the landfill site unveiled how intertwined and diverse the social structures and socio-economic demographics of the area around the landfill are. In addition to several informal dwellings, large private properties surround the government owned landfill site. The expansion of the landfill through a private contractor as planned by the local municipality had already begun before the first open discussions and semi-structured interviews with the residents of the three informal settlements and the adherent private proprietors north of the landfill were held. Through the field officers I learnt that people squatting around the site would need to be relocated due to the progressing expansion of the landfill. The interviews with local stakeholders revealed how informal living within the area dates back two generations and that people have serious concerns about being relocated because of the building process (Field notes I,II,III). The residents of the informal settlements stated that they had not been included in the decision-making process of their relocation by government officials nor had they been offered job opportunities at the construction site. As a result, they not only feared for their livelihood, which has been based on living of the dumpsite and local labour opportunities at the private farms and guesthouses in the area, but were also very insecure about how their future living conditions would be (Field notes I, II, III). In comparison to the residents of the informal settlements, who have very little contact between each other and

scarce access to official information (local media, internet etc.), the private proprietors with adjoining properties to the landfill site had learned about the development in a local newspaper. They mobilized against the expansion through a lawsuit against the Municipality but lost it in August 2010. They received explanatory statements on the developments of the site from a government official once they pressurized the authorities for a concrete response. Their main fears linked to the expansion of the Landfill are the continued health risk of mercury pollution in the air and water<sup>10</sup> and the drop of their property value. When buying the properties, they were initially promised by local government that the landfill would eventually close down (Field notes IV). On one of the last field visits, the private proprietors had started mobilizing the local residents of the settlements for a petition aimed at opposing their relocation process through the Department of Housing. Simultaneously, the Provincial Housing Department began the relocation process of the informal settlements; while the Department of Affairs delivered toilets to these communities. In contrast the Department for Social Development which would be present in form of a community or social worker to support the area with health services etc. appeared not be active within the area (Field notes I, II, III, IV). It is noteworthy that the required appointment of an EmplA consultant who is responsible for monitoring and guiding the EPWP at the development site for this project had not taken place throughout the duration of the fieldwork. The private contractor responsible for the construction work recruitment of local labour under the EPWP objectives on the site was not available for comment during the fieldwork.

### **3.5. Analysis of the Findings**

Merely at a glance, these findings reveal that the EPWP implementation process for the examined project has been fundamentally flawed with regard to the objectives the initiative was meant to achieve. Applying the criteria developed for Public Works Programmes in previous chapters, this section analyses why in the chosen case study the EPWP implementation process has been so problematic.

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<sup>10</sup> For more information:

<http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/MediaReleases/Pages/CityReleasesRptTOnAllegedMercuryPoisonInMornStar.aspx>

In the light of the described theory, labour intensive Public Works Programmes are supposed to target the poorest of the poor in their recruitment for workers and ideally achieve this through a participatory method. Shown in the literature review, the most common form participation takes in relation to targeting, is a community-based selection of beneficiaries at a local level or allocating the wage rate below market wage for self-targeting reasons. In the case of the landfill expansion project, targeting local labour did not occur at all. Let us look why.

A key development in the use of labour-based construction methods over the past 25 years has been the increased involvement of private contractors. Before this, labour-based methods were implemented on a large scale without subcontractors where governments would hire labour directly and provide the necessary technical supervision. However, with the downsizing of governments and the drive towards contracting and outsourcing in the 1990's and early 2000's a shift took place towards using local consultants and contractors to design and implement labour-based projects (Lieuw-Kie-Song & Philip, 2010). The EPWP projects implemented directly by the DTPW are no exception to this. Bearing in mind that private contractors are market-orientated businesses, it comes as no surprise that they are reluctant to make use of labour intensive construction methods due to time and cost-efficiency, let alone are they fundamentally interested in recruiting local unskilled labour. To resolve this, contract conditions can be used to force contractors to draw on local labour and apply labour-based methods for specified parts of the work. However, the experience in South Africa uncovered how this "requires intensive project management from the side of the state. In particular during the contract implementation there is a need to intensively "police" projects to ensure that machines are not used where not allowed (Lieuw-Kie-Song & Philip, 2010, p. 27).

These factors precisely led to the exclusion of the local residents from participating in the expansion of the landfill in the case study. Taking into account their marginalized socio-economic background, specifically the residents of the informal settlements could have benefited from the employment opportunities on the construction site. Nevertheless, as officials at the CIIEU confirmed, the contract did not oblige the private construction company to draw on local labour in its specifications. Moreover the EmplA consultant which

is to overlook the EPWP conform process on site had not been appointed although the construction work was well on its way. Instead of offering a form of income and skills training to local beneficiaries as envisioned in the EPWP mandate, the public works labelled intervention resulted in quite the opposite.

Considering that the relocation of the informal settlements occurred at the same time as toilets were being installed in the area, a further observation was the uncoordinated and disconnected involvement of the different departments within the area. The EPWP is structured according to four sectors (Social, Technical, Environmental and Non-State); different governmental departments are involved in projects according to their specific mandate under this framework. At an institutional level the EPWP Unit is meant to coordinate the project implementation of these different departments involved. Considering the findings that different departments were simultaneously involved at the site with contradicting activities, there seem to be operational mismatch in the EPWP implementation process.

Interestingly, government officials at the provincial level, especially in the CIEU had identified the significance of the pressing challenges confronting the infrastructure sector EPWP projects (hence their request for research into the matter). This underlines the disparity between the public proclamations of the chief acting operating officer of the Department of Transport and Public Works, Butcher Matutle and the operating government officials actually concerned with the rolling out of the EPWP, who take a much more critical stance (Field notes V).

Consequently, the previously explained conceptual constraints of the EPWP and the described problematic implementation process resulted in local stakeholders around the landfill not actively being involved in the public development project at any time. The residents of the informal settlements were left uninformed of a process that was to have fundamental consequences for them. Reduced to a role of hindering the successful expansion of the landfill, residents were side-lined in all decision-making processes that essentially concerned them. Requiring their relocation, the intervention actively threatened the present livelihoods of the people and with it jeopardized their present working

relationships as domestic and seasonal workers at local residencies and farms. Naturally, local acceptance for the project was low, creating insecurity and resentments within the local population towards the EPWP intervention.

Apart from not delivering to its self-proclaimed objectives the findings reveal how harshly government interventions can reinforce local power imbalances between the state and its people. The findings bring to light that instead of empowering those at the edge of society, the government led intervention not only prevented the social and economic inclusion of the residents living in the informal settlements but actually reinforced their marginalization. This stands in strong contrast to the official language of the EPWP: “the creation of decent employment through inclusive economic growth plus an efficient and effective development-orientated Public Service and an empowered fair and inclusive citizenship” (see introduction).

Specifically because the highlighted discourse claims that Public Works Programmes have come to incorporate broader social benefits into their objectives, these findings once more draw attention to the undifferentiated and superficial analysis the literature on these programmes has delivered. Although the language suggests otherwise, the literature reviewed is guided by narrow definitions of poverty and debates around cost-efficiency. It continues to focus on simplified economic concepts of development and rather than adequately analysing to what extent Public Works Programmes have affected their participants at a micro level. If public works programmes are meant to serve as a safety net function and tackle social challenges, a pure economic policy strategy will not suffice. The following section emphasizes this by offering three perspectives of analysis which specifically look into how certain terminologies and narrow concepts have contributed to the further exclusion of the marginalized residents in the case study instead of their empowerment.

### **3.6. Poverty, Power and Participation**

A certain terminology reoccurs throughout the reviewed literature on Public Works Programmes. Considering the heavy usage of terms such as poverty, the poor, etc., authors systematically fall short on offering differentiated and contextualized definitions of the terms they so frequently reiterate. Anthropologists and linguists have brought to attention

how this unquestioned usage of certain expressions can severely impact the relationship between individuals, the society and the state (Escobar, 1988). In reference to the mentioned production of dominant knowledge in the discourse around public works initiatives, narrow and static definitions of poverty and the labelling of individuals or collectives as poor have fundamentally effected the implementation of Public Works Programmes in South Africa. If a definition of poverty is reduced to the lack of income, targeting individuals of working age with no form of income becomes a measurable task. What this definition does not take into consideration is the fact that receiving a form of income does not necessarily translate into an improvement of wellbeing. Yet this is precisely what economists have stipulated. In the debate about targeting and adequate wage allocation, none of the cited authors address these issues in relation to the failing of Public Works Programmes.

Being defined as poor along these lines radically reduces the true capabilities of a human being to meaningfully participate in society. Anti-poverty policies make use of strong generalisations. Sadly, these purely numeric definitions and deficit orientated rhetoric have gained recognition to the extent that “no politician would dare to run on an election platform that ignores economic growth or ‘development’, which is supposed to reduce unemployment and create new jobs and well-being for all” (Cornwall & Eade, 2012, p. 22).

Another aspect which has been left unaddressed in the literature evaluating Public Works Programmes is that “fighting poverty is not simply about the right policies and capacities: it is about the distribution of power” (Marais, 2011, p. 250). The findings in the case study amply demonstrate how disempowering the imbalance in power between the state and its people can be for designated beneficiaries. Power and knowledge differences allow government to sideline and manipulate the interests of the people for its own purposes (Varley, 2002). This stands in strong contrast to the acclaimed goal of precisely empowering the ‘poorest of the poor’ through development measures and economic policymaking. It is probable that in the described case study the institutional and process related flaws in the EPWP implementation reinforced the exclusion of the designated beneficiaries. Different departments were active in counterproductive ways in the area which questions to what extent the EPWP Unit has been successful in its coordination process. It is common sense that people living in social and economic exclusion should receive sufficient so that they are



incorporated and no longer marginalized. It should be noted that the bureaucratic imposition of policies and the interventions that flow from such policies results in political suppression and not democratic emancipation. This brings us to another insufficiently examined aspect of Public Works Programmes: participation.

Originally, 'participation' was conceived as a part of a counter-hegemonic approach to radical social transformation, paradoxically, it now holds its legitimacy within the institutional development world. Reduced to a series of methodological techniques serving neo-liberal means to development practice, the term has lost most of its philosophical and ideological meaning (Cornwall & Eade, 2012, p. 89). This ambiguity has made it vulnerable to the appropriation for political agendas, legitimizing top-down approaches of state led development such as the EPWP. Possibilities for meaningful participation in the EPWP are extremely limited along several lines. First of all, recapping the limited places available for short-term employment in relation to the number of unskilled workers wanting to participate, the EPWP ultimately excludes large numbers of eligible participants. It is therefore considerably unequal in its distribution of opportunities for participation. Secondly, the outsourcing of EPWP infrastructure projects to private contractors has created an entire predicament of its own as the construction companies have not been legally obliged to draw on local un-skilled labour. As the case study revealed, this has profound consequences for the local people. They are totally excluded from the EPWP labelled project and have no level of participation in a process which in the official language of the EPWP is precisely meant to benefit them: create, physical assets that serve poor communities and promote broader economic activity; reduce unemployment through productive jobs; train those on the program as a means of economic empowerment; and build the capacity of communities to manage their own affairs, strengthening local government and other community-based institutions, and generating sustainable economic development (see introduction).

All this emphasizes how on top of the conceptual constraints and drastically failing in its operating procedures, the EPWP has had severely disempowering effects for those envisioned to benefit from it in the researched case study. Considering these controversies,

the key issue remains. To what extent can labour intensive public works programmes help in the alleviation of unemployment and poverty within the context of South Africa?

Looking for literature on local success stories brings up the Zibambele Rural Road Maintenance Programme, in KwaZulu-Natal. It is a labour-intensive road maintenance project in which especially women-headed households are contracted to maintain a specific length of rural road. An evaluative report describes how the programme was successful due to unified implementing authorities and effective collaboration with communities. This at least indicates how local public works initiatives have successfully tackled some of the issues of the EPWP that were revealed in the case study. However, the report also mentions constraints such as the limited scope for entrepreneurial development for the surrounding communities and the need for a more targeted approach to implementation (Strebel, 2004). It needs to be further investigated if and how programmes of this sort can contribute in a meaningful way to the unemployment crisis in South Africa. A vital ingredient for future public works programmes are initial and on-going external monitoring and evaluation processes, so that actual programme impact can be tracked effectively against the high rising claims these programmes have in theory.

Considering these numerous challenges, the dilemma remains, although high ranking government officials have notoriously claimed otherwise, the case study and review of literature on the topic have revealed that up to date the EPWP has not broadly contributed to combating the rising inequality or large-scale unemployment in South Africa. In the context of the individuals interviewed, it has to some extent, even reinforced social and economic segregation.

#### **4. AT THE BRINK OF CHANGE?**

In a speech delivered by the COSATU President, Sidumo Dlamini, at the Jobs for Youth Summit II, held from 26-28 October 2011, the trade union calls for the reconceptualisation of the EPWP. It openly stresses how EPWP projects need to be implemented directly by the state as private service providers have mainly focused on profit instead of equitable employment. In absolute contrast to neo-liberal policies of reduced state interventionism, COSATU calls the state to directly intervene into the dynamics of the labour market.

Proposing a full employment scheme, it recommends the following elements for a revised EPWP:

“(a) Employment for everyone of working age, willing and able to work (b) Productive employment of the labour force, especially in the delivery and maintenance of social and economic infrastructure (c) A minimum real wage, which can be set according to skill (d) Skills development” (COSATU, 2011).

In its bold end of the year statement in 2011, COSATU then declared:

“Unless we embrace radical economic programmes, and in particular develop the capacity of the state to intervene in the economy and drive development, we are doomed. Unless we can build the capacity of local governments to take back areas they have outsourced, whilst increasing funding so as to discourage the use of more tenders and use their resources for service delivery and job creation, we shall not realise the dream of many for a better life” (COSATU, 2011a).

Looking at the current economic strategy, one is inclined to believe that there actually has been a fundamental shift away from the neo-liberal free-market principles towards deliberate state interventionism. In his recent State of the Nation address, incumbent President Jacob Zuma stated:

“As a developmental state that is located at the centre of a mixed economy, we see our role as being to lead and guide the economy and to intervene in the interest of the poor, given the history of our country. Informed by this responsibility, in 2010 we launched the New Growth Path framework and identified our job drivers as infrastructure development, tourism, agriculture, mining, manufacturing and the green economy”<sup>11</sup>.

Stressing the notion of a developmental state unquestionably is different to the economic principles practiced under GEAR, but is this shift in economic policy a genuinely radical commitment as COSATU demanded? Job creation and a rhetoric of ‘decent work for all’ did gain centre stage attention in the formulation of the mentioned New Growth Path (Government, 2010). Targeting the creation of five million jobs by 2020, the strategy paper acknowledged the critique around the ‘jobless growth’ GEAR had produced and proposes:

“Two key variables will affect the target of five million new jobs: the rate of economic growth and the employment intensity of that growth – that is, the rate

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<sup>11</sup> Mail & Guardian article: <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-02-09-president-zumas-state-of-the-nation-address>

of growth in employment relative to the rate of growth in GDP. In effect, we need both to maximise growth and to ensure that it generates more employment, mostly in the private sector, in order to reach our target”<sup>12</sup>.

Nevertheless, this also demonstrates how the strategy once again heavily relies upon sustained macroeconomic growth and the private sector to create the jobs. Choosing the terminology of a ‘developmental state’ does not automatically prevent the strategy from operating within a neo-liberal paradigm. Considering that GEAR never lived up to its forecast in growth, relying on growth under the current global conditions appears even more unpromising. The economic development of South Africa since its political freedom undoubtedly has not been as independent from the global forces of capitalism as the left wing had anticipated. Critics maintain the government has been confronted with a dilemma of needing to reconcile the insertion of the nation into the global churn of capital with the promises of radical redistribution it had made because of the liberation movement (Sheehan, 2011).

Considering the accomplishment of turning to government led job creation to battle unemployment, the commitment to labour intensive infrastructure development within the New Growth Path lacks decisiveness and innovative commitment. In contrast to the idea of employment for everyone of working age, the public investment in infrastructure is meant to create a mere “250.000 jobs a year in energy, transport, water and communications infrastructure and in housing, through to 2015” and it is not clear if this is in addition to the EPWP targets or included within its strategy. In relation to the expected outcomes, again there is the unquestioned assumption that “the impact of the massive infrastructure programme on job creation across the economy (the ‘multiplier effect’) will be substantial” (new growth plan page 10). Calling for a massive infrastructure development through state led employment creation certainly is not a South African invention. The ILO specifically highlights this in its recent literature dealing with the renewed interest in Public Works Programmes as a crisis remedy for both developed and developing countries alike: “Investment in infrastructure development can play an active role in employment generation, both directly and indirectly through their multiplier effect within different economic sectors” (Lieuw-Kie-Song & Philip, 2010, p. 3). Actually, looking back to the early

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<sup>12</sup>Government website: <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=135748>

discussions around Public Works Programmes described in the literature on “pump priming” the idea of investing into rails roads definitely is not a new concept (Anderson, 1944). All of this just reinforces the impression that recent literature dealing with Public Works Programmes is still not finding the underlying cause of the problems these interventions have perpetuated. Therefore, relying on policy advice coming from institutions such as the World Bank or ILO will not suffice to address the economic and social challenges confronting the South African people. Nevertheless, the present economic strategy precisely exhibits how South African policy makers have relied on the economic principles and labour market remedies stemming from these policy advisors.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

International institutions such as the World Bank and ILO have legitimized and promoted the application of Public Works Programmes for developing countries in spite of their limited outcomes. These two bodies are the primary producers of knowledge on Public Works Programmes. Further research is needed to look into why the non-state sector has been so little involved in the scrutiny of the discourse. Especially because, the current literature has offered little critical theoretical analysis or conceptual clarity for a wide field of different initiatives labelled as Public Works Programmes. Applying narrow definitions of poverty and preoccupied with the cost efficiency of these programmes, economists have primarily fallen short on analysing the actual effects public works initiatives have had for their designated beneficiaries at the grass roots of society. The discussed case study and presented examples have demonstrated the limits of the EPWP. To live up to its objectives and deliver the results South African government officials have proclaimed, the EPWP would considerably need to change its design, institutional framework and implementation process. Critics agree that in order to substantially affect unemployment numbers and achieve significant sustained social protection outcomes through a Public Works Programmes in South Africa, a medium- to long-term intervention is required together with a considerably higher budget allocation for it. Nevertheless, the implementation of these programmes has not adequately considered these recommendations. While programmes such as Zibambele claim to offer an example of a successful intervention, a dedicated evaluation and monitoring of such programmes is required. Only then can estimation be

made if their design will be able to cope with the magnitude of the unemployment crisis in South Africa. Solemnly relying on recommendations from international institutions and policy advisors will not make the EPWP more responsive to the South African situation. Looking into a qualitative case study revealed that the evaluation of the EPWP has notoriously left out critical dimensions of analysis. Subsequently, a need for further research looking into the power dynamics and unquestioned terminology of Public Works Programmes was identified. South African policy makers at the national and provincial level need to critically engage with international entities to draft solutions, which match the South African economic context. Instead of replicating the malfunctioning precast ways prescribed by Western policy advisors, a dialog between scholars, politicians and organized labour can help find the adequate remedies for the persevering challenges confronting the country. This could not only enhance true democratic decision-making but significantly contribute to generating the currently lacking critical analysis of Public Works Programmes in the international literature.

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University of Cape Town

# ANNEXES

## Field note I

Date: 26.08.2010

Time: 11:45 – 12:35

Location: Informal settlement I, north of the Landfill

Participants: Field Officer (Translator),  
local resident and 'community leader' (male)  
Students (2)

Subject: Semi-structured interview on the living conditions within and the process of the relocation of the informal settlement<sup>13</sup>.

### Preliminary Questions:

How long have you been living here?

Do you have any source of income?

What have you been promised considering the relocation?

"My grandmother already lived here; I was working and living on a farm before that. Then I lost my job there and started working in town. I came to stay here to look after her (grandmother) when she was sick. I don't have a job, I cut wood here out of the bush and sell it and people ask me to cut wood for them. But my machine is broken and machines of other people are also always broken. Every Wednesday my girlfriend goes to T\*\*\*\* and looks for things we can use and eat in the rubbish (tears in his eyes). The people from government have promised us houses since 3 years now, they don't tell us where. How are our children going to get to school? They have offered me a house in D\*\*\*\* (formal and informal settlement area), I don't want to go there. There is no work and it isn't safe. I cannot cut wood there anymore. Some of us work sometimes in the brick factory or collect flying around plastic for the dump. But there are no jobs! So many people have come here to talk to me, even a newspaper. Nothing ever happens. Now we get letters from the M\*\*\*\* Estate which tells us to move but Government is building toilets. What is going on (looks at field officer)?

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<sup>13</sup> The interview has been translated and the information considered relevant for the case study summarized.

## Field note II

Date: 06.09.2010

Time: 13:30 – 14:10

Location: Informal settlement 2 next to entrance of the Landfill

Participants: Field Officer (Translator),  
local resident and 'community leader' (female)  
Students (2)

Subject: Semi-structured interview on the living conditions within and the process of the relocation of the informal settlement<sup>14</sup>.

### Preliminary Questions:

How long have you been living here?

What have you been promised considering the relocation?

What kind of income do people have?

Do you have contact to other community leaders of the other informal settlements?

"I used to and work on a farm in M\*\*\*\*, I moved here when the farm closed. Why are you asking me these questions? Just a while ago a reporter came and asked me all the questions and he then wrote an article that we are all sex workers and drug addicts (*Explanation why we are doing research*). They have been promising us housing for years, but where are they going to move us? People in Atlantis don't want us; there are no jobs there for them already. We get scrap of the dump, although they have now got security and lock us out. And how are our children going to get to school? At least there is a bus here. The children from the other settlements walk far through the bush to even get to the bus – and it's dangerous. We don't have a lot to do with the other people; we don't talk much to the blacks. We're just trying to survive here.

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<sup>14</sup> The interview has been translated and the information considered relevant for the case study summarized.

### Field note III

Date: 03.09.2010

Time: 09:45 – 10:15

Location: Driving to landfill site from local municipality

Participants: Field Officers (2, male) from Informal Settlement Management  
2 Students

Subject: Conversation on the process of relocating informal settlements and the local residents within the landfill area.

There are three informal settlements scattered around the Landfill, the largest one comprising about 250 families/households (Based on a count conducted by the responsible field officers). The criminality rate is high and very little police or law enforcement is possible within the area. There is too little knowledge about the local family and living structures. All residents must be relocated for the expansion of the Landfill site. Negotiations on where to move them are in progress at the Department of Housing. The process has been complicated as communities<sup>15</sup> living in the areas to where the informal dwellers are to be relocated have mobilized resistance. In addition communication between government officials at the different levels in the process has been vague. The Informal Settlement Management and responsible field officers are informed two weeks before the relocation has to take place. On the site they are confronted with the questions and needs of the local residents who demand concrete information. According to the locally appointed community leaders, residents in the informal settlements have not been included or consulted concerning the relocation process. The field officers visit the informal settlements on a daily basis and enjoy the trust of the communities; they have not met in person or heard about a social/community worker for the area. According to the local residents a mobile Clinique visits the area two times a month; there is no concrete information available on what health services it provides.

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<sup>15</sup> In this context the term community is used to describe the self-proclaimed communal structures of the local residents.

#### Field note IV

Date: 08.09.2010

Time: 12:45 – 13:15

Location: Private property north of the Landfill site

Participants: Owner (male)  
Students (2)

Subject: Conversation on the expansion process of the Landfill and on the relocation of the informal settlements in the area.

The neighborhood area consists of private properties which engage into horse riding and tourism or guest houses plus one informal settlement on unused farming grounds. Domestic workers and other employees on the farms come from the surrounding informal settlements (including those at the Landfill site). Local residents have a telephone network for communication and regular community<sup>16</sup> meetings. In buying the properties in average about ten years ago, all proprietors were promised that the landfill site would close down. Fearing for the devaluation of their properties as the Landfill will expand as close as to 800m towards their terrain. In addition, by referring to research done on health risks<sup>17</sup>, they have opposed to the expansion of the landfill by taking the case to court. They lost the case in August 2010.

In response to the relocation of the informal settlements, they have commenced on negotiations and community meetings. A government official came to explain the situation and possible areas for relocation after the community approached local government for explanations. The employees on the farms have expressed their concerns to their employers how they will get to work if they are relocated out of walking distance.

In addition, local residents are concerned about the expansion of the massive road works on the highway interchange etc.

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<sup>16</sup> In this context the term community is used to describe the self-proclaimed communal structures of the local residents.

<sup>17</sup> Available at: [http://web.capetown.gov.za/wcms/eDocuments/Visshershok-UCT\\_Mercury\\_Study\\_1310200483718\\_267.pdf](http://web.capetown.gov.za/wcms/eDocuments/Visshershok-UCT_Mercury_Study_1310200483718_267.pdf)

## Field notes V

Date: 10.09.2010

Time: 11:05 – 13:15

Location: Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW), Cape Town

Participants: Acting Manager (female) of the Empowerment Impact Assessment Tool (EmplA)  
Students (2)

Subject: Discussion on the structures and functioning of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the development of the EmplA.

The DTPW has been confronted with several problems in its EPWP led development interventions:

- Building sites have been stopped by local residents, leading to higher costs for government
- Contractors often fail to employ local workers as foreseen in the EPWP strategy
- EmplAs are done too late in the process- need to be done before tenders apply for the job.
- The intended socio-economic impact of the development projects remained low.

In reaction to this the department invested into the research and design of the EmplA Guideline in 2004. The initial document provided the context for the development of the EmplA as an extension of the Preferential Procurement Plan and also set out the process to be followed when developing the EmplA. This guideline has now been revised (2010) but the objectives remain the same.

- The development of communal project ownership via inclusion, participation and information-sharing thus enhancing accountability
- The development of local organisational capacity
- The provision of opportunities aimed at facilitating meaningful economic empowerment

(See EmplA Guideline Document Revised 2010)



Key aspects: Information and transparency that enhances participation

Participation and accountability continue to ensure that beneficiaries have a stake in developments that affect them directly.

- ➔ The revised guideline takes into consideration that ownership and empowerment are not only promoted by infrastructural capacity building but require a broader and socially sensitive definition of economic development.
- ➔ But the problem remains that the DTPW led programs are not sensitive enough to demographic and social issues at the development site

Before the EPWP the DTPW engaged into so called Community Based Public Works Programs, these used to engage more directly with the local level in providing local labor opportunities etc.

- Community Access Roads Programme
- SAAMSTAAN

With the changing of the Minister, the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase led to the delegation of the different projects to the relevant departments (for example the Department of Social Development, Department of Local Government and Housing etc.). Strategies change with each legislation period. The EPWP is now a program undertaken by all departments (See EPWP 5 year plan). This change in structures has obscured communication between development projects and departments. Leaving it up to the responsibility of the different departments to implement the EPWP there is no standardized way of enhancing community involvement and development projects are not linked to each other.